



## MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** May 28, 2020

**Agenda Item:** Fresno Reservoir Wildlife Management Area Grazing Lease Extension

**Action Needed:** Final Approval

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

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**Background:** The 2,640-acre Fresno Reservoir Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located 24 miles northwest of Havre in Hill County. The property is administered by the Bureau of Reclamation and managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to benefit wildlife and provide recreational opportunities. The WMA consists of riparian, native mixed-grass prairie, and wetland habitats. The grazing system permits an average of 264 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) of grazing on the WMA. There would be a maximum of 100 Animal Units (AU) allowed under this lease. Pastures on the WMA are grazed in a three-pasture rest-rotation grazing system, but these pastures receive additional periods of rest due to the inclusion of adjacent private and leased land in the system.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** FWP prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) pursuant to MEPA to assess the potential impacts of the alternatives to the human and physical environment. The draft EA was made available to the public on the FWP website and notices were mailed to surrounding landowners, Hill County commissioners, and other local officials. Electronic notifications of the EA's availability were also made to other individuals, agencies, and interested parties. Public notices of the opportunity to comment were placed in the Havre Daily News, Great Falls Tribune, and Independent Record. The EA was open for a 30-day public comment period that ran from Feb. 4 to March 4. A public meeting was held on Feb. 13 in Havre. The meeting was attended by one person who indicated they were in support of the lease extension. There were no public comments received during the comment period.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** The proposed alternative is to extend the grazing lease for six years until Dec. 31, 2026. Grazing under this alternative would continue following the existing grazing management plan and stocking rate. The lessee would be allowed to graze up to 100 AU and an average of 264 AUMs during the term of this lease.

If the grazing lease is not extended, there would be no grazing permitted on the Fresno Reservoir WMA starting in 2021. The lessee would be allowed to continue grazing until the current lease expires in December of 2020.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** FWP recommends extending the grazing lease for the Fresno Reservoir WMA for an additional six years until Dec. 31, 2026.

**Proposed Motion:**

I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the extension of the Fresno Reservoir WMA grazing lease.